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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BOGOTA 010238

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [KJUS](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [CO](#) [AUC](#)

SUBJECT: MANCUSO OUT, NEW SPOKESPERSONS FOR DEMOBILIZED  
PARAMILITARIES IN

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood.

Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d)

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SUMMARY

1. (C) Representatives of 11 demobilized Colombian United Self-Defense Groups (AUC) factions have removed Salvatore Mancuso as AUC spokesperson and replaced him with three leaders: Diego Murillo, AKA "Don Berna," Antonio Lopez, and Eduard Cobos, AKA "Diego Vecino." The AUC replaced Mancuso because they claim his personal concerns about possible extradition were affecting his advocacy of AUC interests. The new AUC spokespersons, however, are not necessarily more willing or able to represent all demobilized paramilitaries' interests. Tensions between demobilized and active AUC leaders make the challenge inherently difficult. End Summary.

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MANCUSO ON HIS OWN

2. (C) AUC leader Mancuso's personal concern with his possible extradition has led to his removal as recognized spokesperson for the demobilized paramilitaries. According to well-respected RCN journalist Alfredo Bustillo, who has covered the paramilitary phenomenon for several years, Mancuso's ouster should not come as a surprise since he has slowly been removing himself from the negotiation process with the GOC and become more focused on his personal future. Senator Carlos Moreno de Caro's mid-October interview in El Tiempo newspaper discussed Mancuso's interest in serving part of his sentence in the U.S. or Spain -- a move that confirmed the fears of demobilized paramilitaries that he no longer served the interest of the organization. Nevertheless, Bustillo explained that, despite the resentment some AUC leaders and members harbor against Mancuso, he was unlikely to suffer the same fate as AUC leader Carlos Castano (Castano is rumored to have been killed by AUC members in April 2004), and he still has significant clout over the peace process.

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NEW AUC SPOKESPERSONS NOT SO REPRESENTATIVE

3. (C) Peace Commissioner Luis Carlos Restrepo told the Ambassador that the new three -- Diego Murillo, AKA "Don Berna," Antonio Lopez, and Eduard Cobos, AKA "Diego Vecino" -- were unlikely to last since they did not fully represent the interest of all demobilized paramilitaries.

-- Diego Murillo, AKA &Don Berna8: Don Berna was commander of the Cacique Nutibara Bloc (BCN), which demobilized in Medellin in November 2003. According to Bustillo, his drug trafficking wealth has given him significant power within the AUC. Bustillo considers this Don Berna's latest effort to increase his control over the remainder of the AUC and to strengthen the AUC's negotiating stance against extradition.

-- Antonio Lopez of the Cacique Nutibara Bloc: According to researcher Juan Carlos Garzon at the independent, well-respected security think tank, Security and Democracy Foundation (FSD), Lopez is close to Don Berna and has always played a behind-the-scenes leadership role in the Medellin's BCN. In recent years, his leadership role in Medellin's neighborhoods has increased and he has recently being chosen to lead the Cooperation for Democracy Center in Medellin, which works with over 1,500 demobilized paramilitaries. Lopez is described by many as intelligent, but with limited freedom of action under Don Berna.

-- Eduard Cobos, AKA "Diego Vecino": Vecino was commander of the Heroes of Montes of Maria Bloc, which demobilized in Bolivar Department in July 2005. Garzon describes Vecino as more a Mancuso supporter since his Montes de Maria Bloc fell under the overall leadership of Mancuso. He is politically influential in Bolivar Department. The FARC kidnapped him twice; once he escaped, the second time his family paid the ransom. Bustillo said that Vecino is concerned with being extradited and wants to fight to remove extradition as negotiations proceed. Vecino is also concerned with charges he may face for &unpardonable8 crimes for his alleged role in the San Onofre massacre in Sucre Department (San Onofre is the site where authorities have found a significant number of

bodies; specific dates of the murders involved are unclear).

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DIVISIONS BETWEEN AUC LEADERS  
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14. (C) Tensions between demobilized and active AUC leaders highlight the inherently difficult challenge of representing a large group of paramilitaries with different interests. Bustillo claims that North Bloc leader Rodrigo Tovar Pupo, AKA "Jorge 40," whose group has yet to demobilize, is not in favor of Don Berna's control over the organization and argues that Don Berna only represents his own interest rather than the organization's views. Bustillo explains that it is in the interest of Don Berna and his supporters for the peace process to continue and guarantee a complete demobilization of the AUC and the implementation of the Justice and Peace law. On the other hand, according to Bustillo, Jorge 40 and Central Bolivar Bloc leader, Lorenzo Gonzalez, AKA "Macaco," are in no rush to demobilize and willing to delay the process indefinitely.

WOOD